

Message Text

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12

ACTION EA-14

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R 250825Z SEP 73

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8277

INFO USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 9621

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT CH

SUBJ: NCNA RECALLS CHIANG CHING'S ROLE IN OPERA REFORM

SUMMARY. NCNA HAS AGAIN CREDITED CHIANG CHING'S LEADING ROLE IN OPERA REFORM, POSSIBLY WITH AN AIM OF MAINTAINING IN FOREIGN EYES A RESPECTABLE IMAGE OF HER STATUS WITHIN THE REGIME. END SUMMARY

1. A SEPTEMBER 24 NCNA ARTICLE (ENGLISH LANGUAGE FILE) ON THE REFORM OF PEKING OPERA RENEWS CREDIT TO CHIANG CHING FOR HER LEADING ROLE IN THAT ACTIVITY. IT IS TEMPTING TO INTERPRET THIS ATTENTION TO HER AS A CONSOLATION PRIZE FOR HER HAVING BEEN PASSED OVER FOR POLITICAL PROMOTION AT THE TENTH PARTY CONGRESS. IT COULD ALSO SUGGEST THAT HER INFLUENCE IS, PERHAPS, EVEN MORE LIMITED NOW TO CULTURAL AFFAIRS. THERE IS AN INTRIGUING FEATURE IN THE ARTICLE WHICH MIGHT HINT AT CURRENT CONTROVERSY OVER OPERA--OR AT THE CURRENT USE OF OPERA AS A TOOL IN WAGING CONTROVERSY--BUT IF SO, THE ALLUSION IS TOO CRYPTIC FOR US TO FOLLOW.

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WM THE ARTICLE, IN THE FORM OF AN INTERVIEW WITH OPERA STAR HAO LIANG, TWICE REFERS TO CHINAG AS HAVING LED THE REVOLUTION IN OPERA, AND DISCUSSES THE OPPOSITION SHE MET FROM THE REVISIONISTS LINE, HEADED BY "LIU SHAO-CHI AND HIS AGENTS." THE OPERA "RED LANTERN" IS HELD UP AS AN ILLUSTRATION OF THAT STRUGGLE. THIS IS AN INTERESTING CHOICE, BECAUSE THE SAME OPERA FEATURED IN LITERARY CRITICISM WHICH APPEARED, PRIOR TO THE CONGRESS, IN AN ARTICLE CARRIED IN CHINA RECONSTRUCTS IN JUNE (NO 6) AND REPUBLISHED IN THE JULY ISSUE OF CHINESE LITERATURE (NO 7). THE ARTICLE CONTRASTED "RED LANTERN" WITH A RIVAL VERSION OF THE SAME STORY WHICH CAME OUT IN A FILM, "NATURALLY THERE WILL BE SUCCESSORS," AND ENJOYED FAVORABLE COMMENT PRIOR TO THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION. THE ARTICLE ATTRACTED SOME INTEREST WHEN IT FIRST APPEARED BECAUSE IT CONTAINED THE ASSERTION THAT THERE "ARE STILL SOME PERSONS TRYING TO SUMMON" THE FILM "FROM ITS GRAVE...IN ORDER TO NEGATE.. THE VICTORY OF PROLETARIAN ART AND LITERATURE." THERE WAS A POSSIBLE IMPLICATION THAT SOMEONE WAS OUT TO GET CHIANG.

3. NCNA CLEARLY TALKS ABOUT THE SAME FILM WITHOUT, HOWEVER, NAMING IT OR SUGGESTING THAT ANYONE WANTS TO REVIVE IT. INSTEAD, NCNA SEEMS TO AIM ONLY AT REMINDING READERS OF CHIANG'S REVOLUTIONARY CONTRIBUTION IN THE FIELD OF OPERA, AND PERHAPS, OF THE FACT THAT IN DOING SO SHE MET RESISTANCE AND WENT "AGAINST THE TIDE," A VIRTUE MUCH PRAISED AT THE RECENT CONGRESS. NCNA'S MESSAGE MAY BE INTENDED PRIMARILY FOR FOREIGNERS; THE HONG KONG COMMUNIST PRESS HAS NOT YET CARRIED THE ITEM, AND TO OUR KNOWLEDGE THE PREVIOUS CRITICISM ARTICLE MENTIONED ABOVE APPEARED ONLY IN PUBLICATIONS INTENDED FOR FOREIGNERS. IF FOREIGNERS ARE THE TARGET OF THE NCNA ARTICLE THE PURPOSE MAY BE TO GLOSS OVER CHIANG'S APPARENT POLITICAL MISFORTUNE AND TO MAINTAIN A RESPECTABLE IMAGE OF HER STATUS WITHIN THE REGIME. SUCH A PURPOSE WOULD MAKE GOOD SENCE FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS, NOT THE LEAST BECAUSE OF THE CONTINUED, IMPORTANT USE THE REGIME IS MAKING OF HER IN TOP LEVEL FOREIGN VISITS AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES.

OSBORN

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